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*Form Approved
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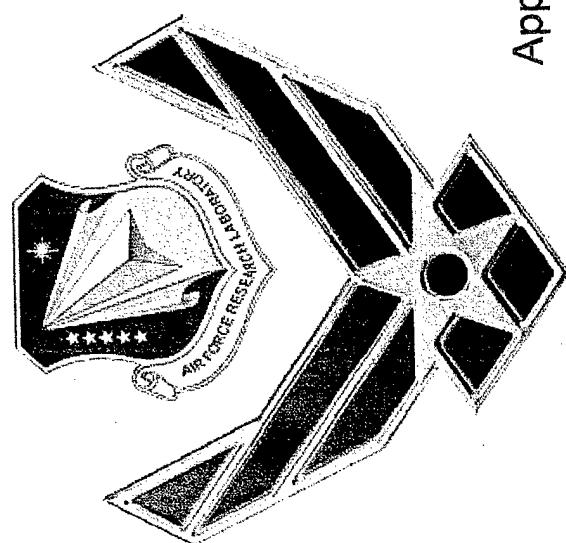
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 05-09-2003		2. REPORT TYPE Technical Viewgraph Presentation		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Study to Determine the Effectiveness and Cost of a Laser-Propelled "Lightcraft" Vehicle System – Results to Guide Future Developments		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER F04611-99-C-0025		5b. GRANT NUMBER	
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S) Froning, Pike, McKinney (Flight Unlimited); Frank Mead, Jr., Bill Larson (AFRL/PRSP)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER 4847		5e. TASK NUMBER 0159	
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
Flight Unlimited Flagstaff AZ					
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
Air Force Research Laboratory (AFMC) AFRL/PRS 5 Pollux Drive Edwards AFB CA 93524-7048		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S NUMBER(S) AFRL-PR-ED-VG-2003-221			
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES For presentation at the 2 nd International Symposium on Beamed Energy Propulsion taking place in Sendai, Japan, from 20-23 October 2003.					
14. ABSTRACT					
20031017 119					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Leilani Richardson	
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified	A	12	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) (661) 275-5015

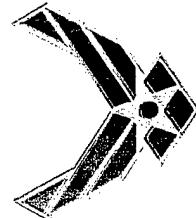
**STUDY TO DETERMINE THE
EFFECTIVENESS AND COST OF A
LASER-PROPELLED "LIGHTCRAFT"
VEHICLE SYSTEM - RESULTS TO
GUIDE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

**Second International Symposium
on
Beamed Energy Propulsion
Sendai, Japan
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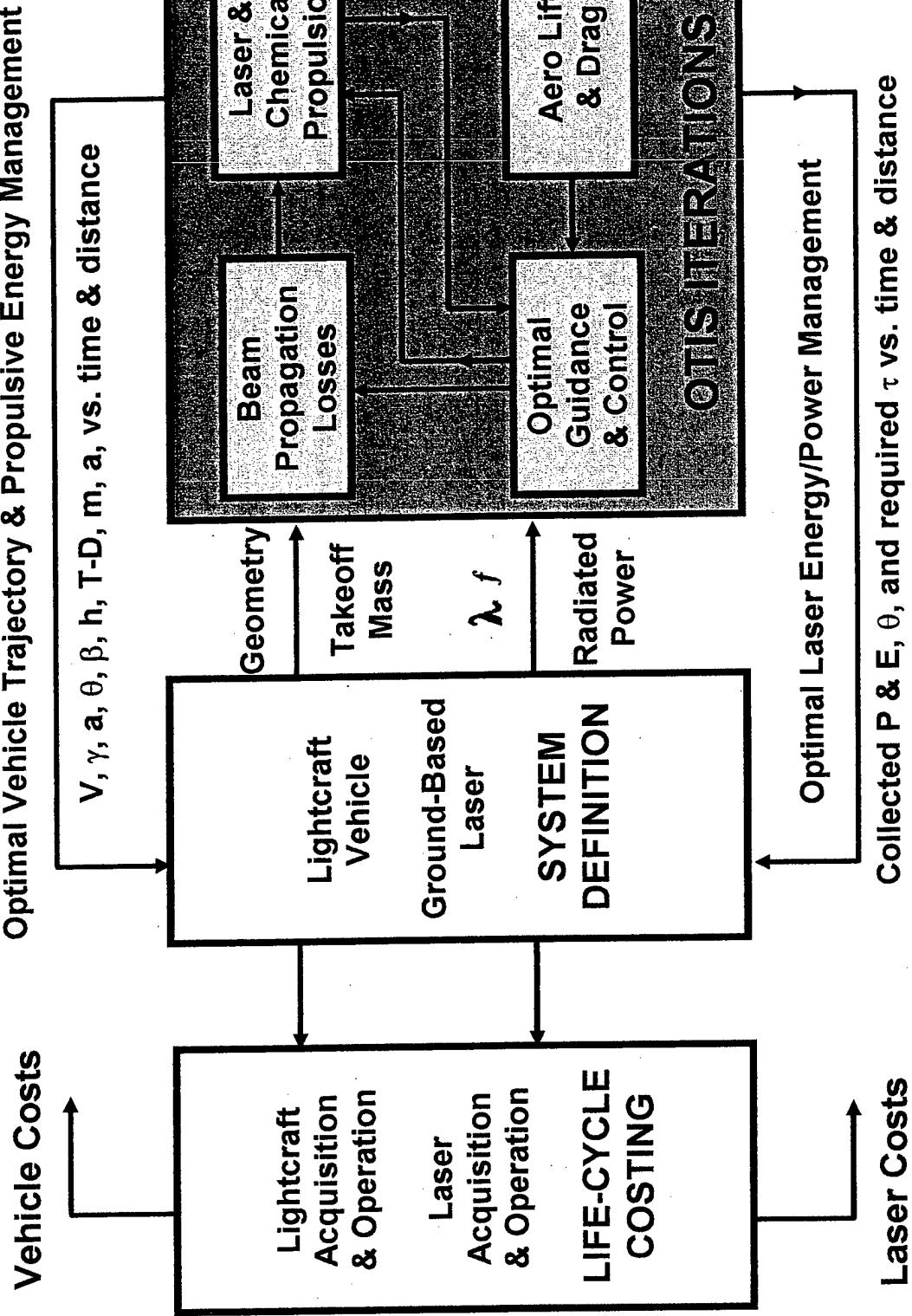
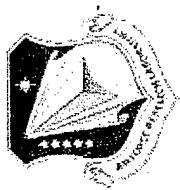
**By Froning, Pike, McKinney, Mead, & Larson
Work Performed by Flight Unlimited, Flagstaff, AZ
Under the Direction of the Propulsion Directorate
Air Force Research Laboratory, Edwards AFB, CA**



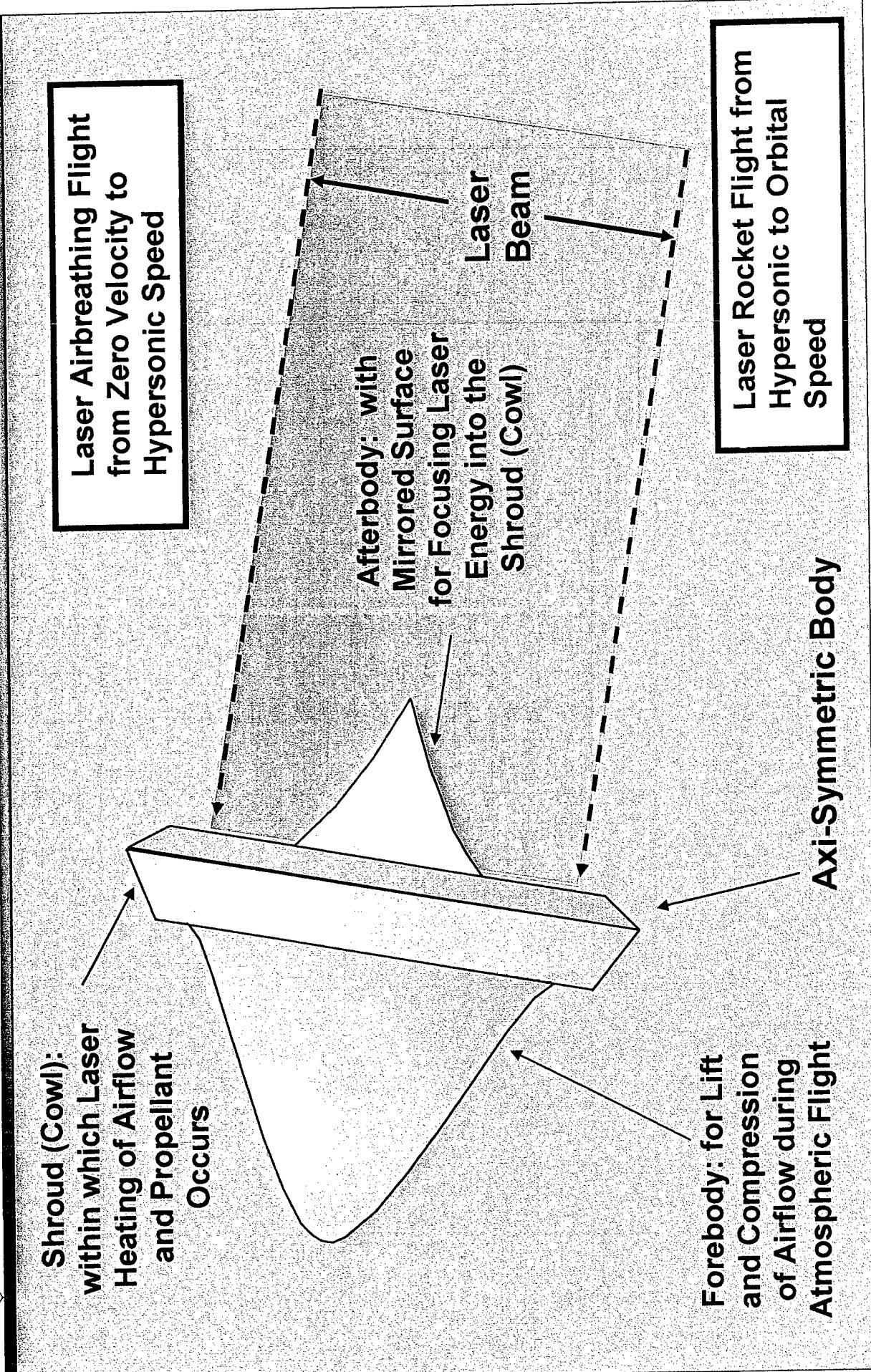
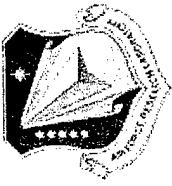
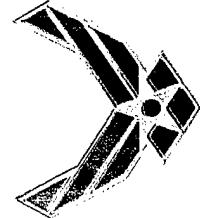
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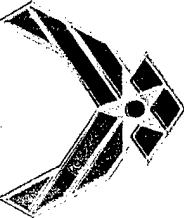


Flow Diagram of Laser Lightcraft System Study



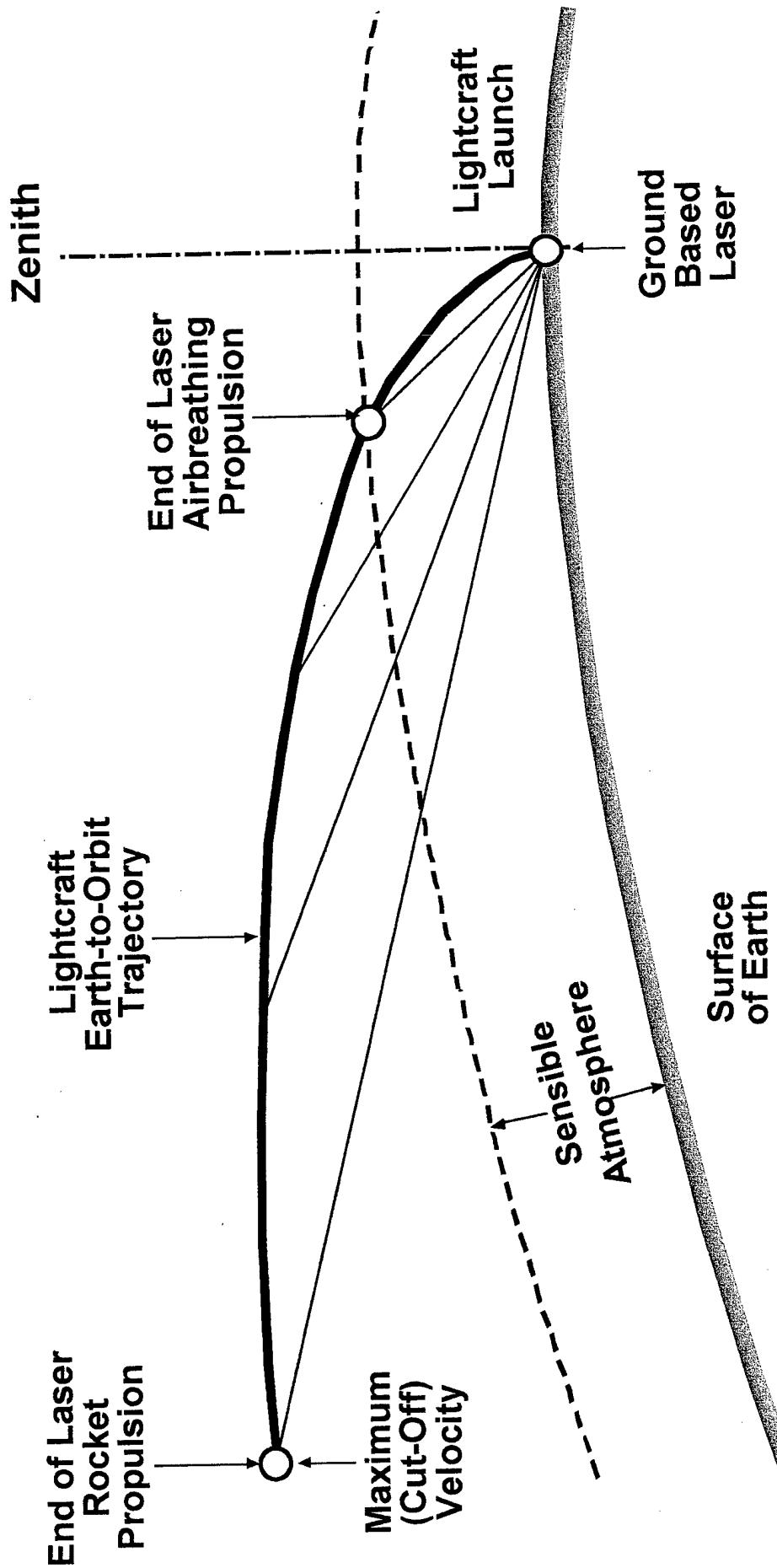
Lightcraft Vehicle Concept

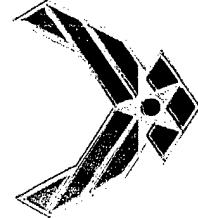




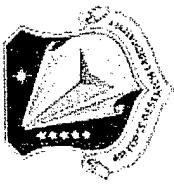
Lightcraft Earth-to-Orbit Trajectory and Associated Pointing Direction of Laser Beam

(Not to Scale)





Laser Beam Power Loss Mechanisms



Diffraction:

Reduces Vacuum Propagation Intensity of Power P and wavelength λ , through an aperture of diameter D at a range of R to : $PD^2/R^2\lambda^2$

Thermal Blooming:

Laser Heating of Air Distorts Far Field Beam:

- Aggravated by low wind, low slew rate, high absorption, high power density

Turbulence:

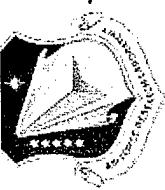
Fluctuates Day-to-Day & Seasonally:

- Aggravated by low altitude targets, short wavelength, large diameter beams

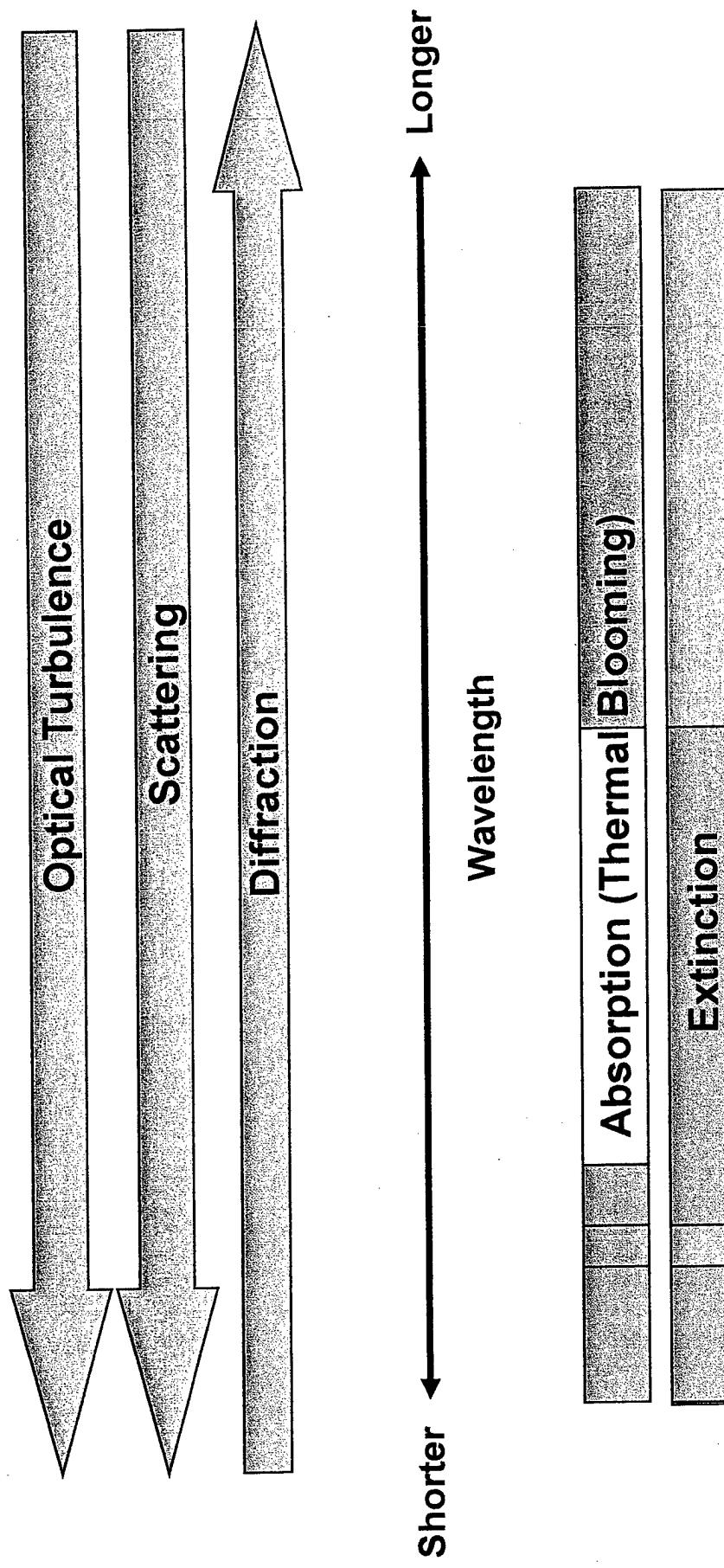
Extinction:

Varies Seasonally, Daily if Fog/Rain, & by Detailed Laser Wavelength(s):

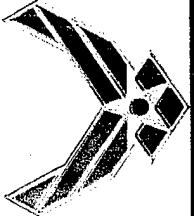
- Aggravated by higher temperature, long ranges, rain
- Devastated by fog, clouds



Optimization Considerations Balancing Loss Mechanisms



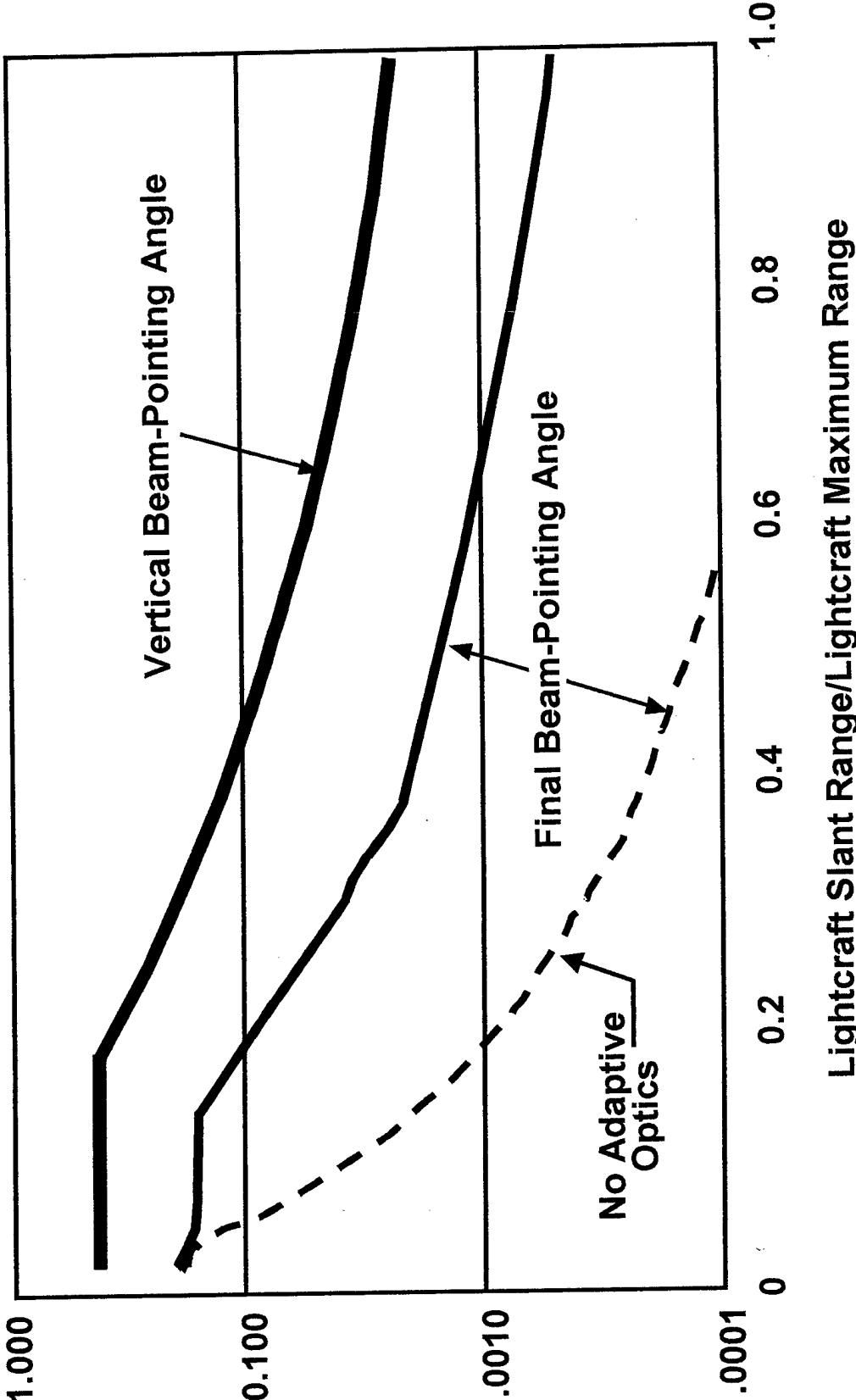
Selecting the Appropriate wavelength is a Delicate Balancing Act

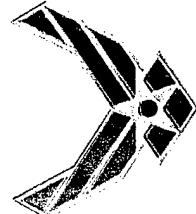


Influence of Lightcraft Range and Laser Pointing Angle on Laser Power Captured by Lightcraft

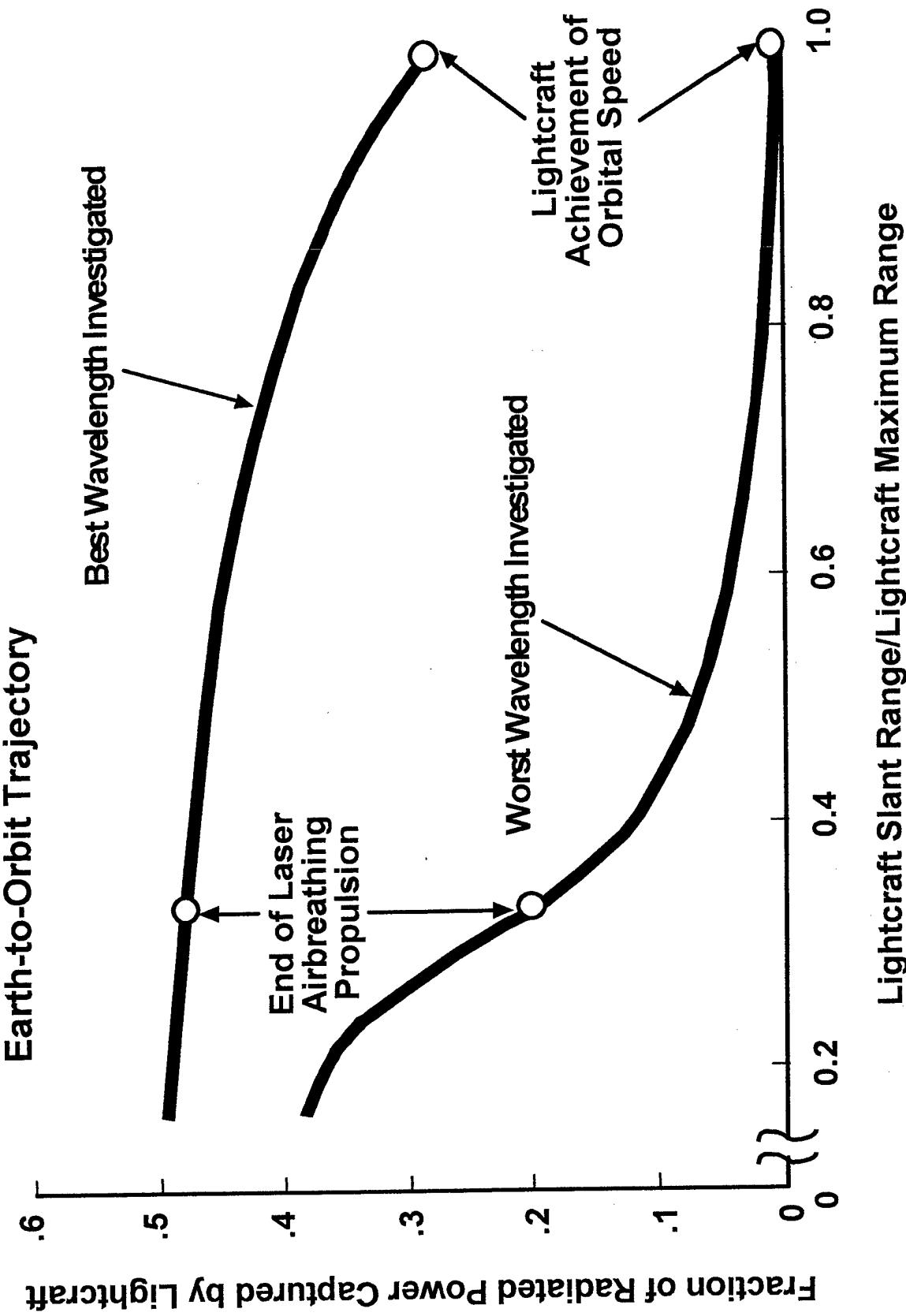
Fraction of Radiated Power Captured by Lightcraft

Given Laser Wavelength/Aperture and Lightcraft Diameter



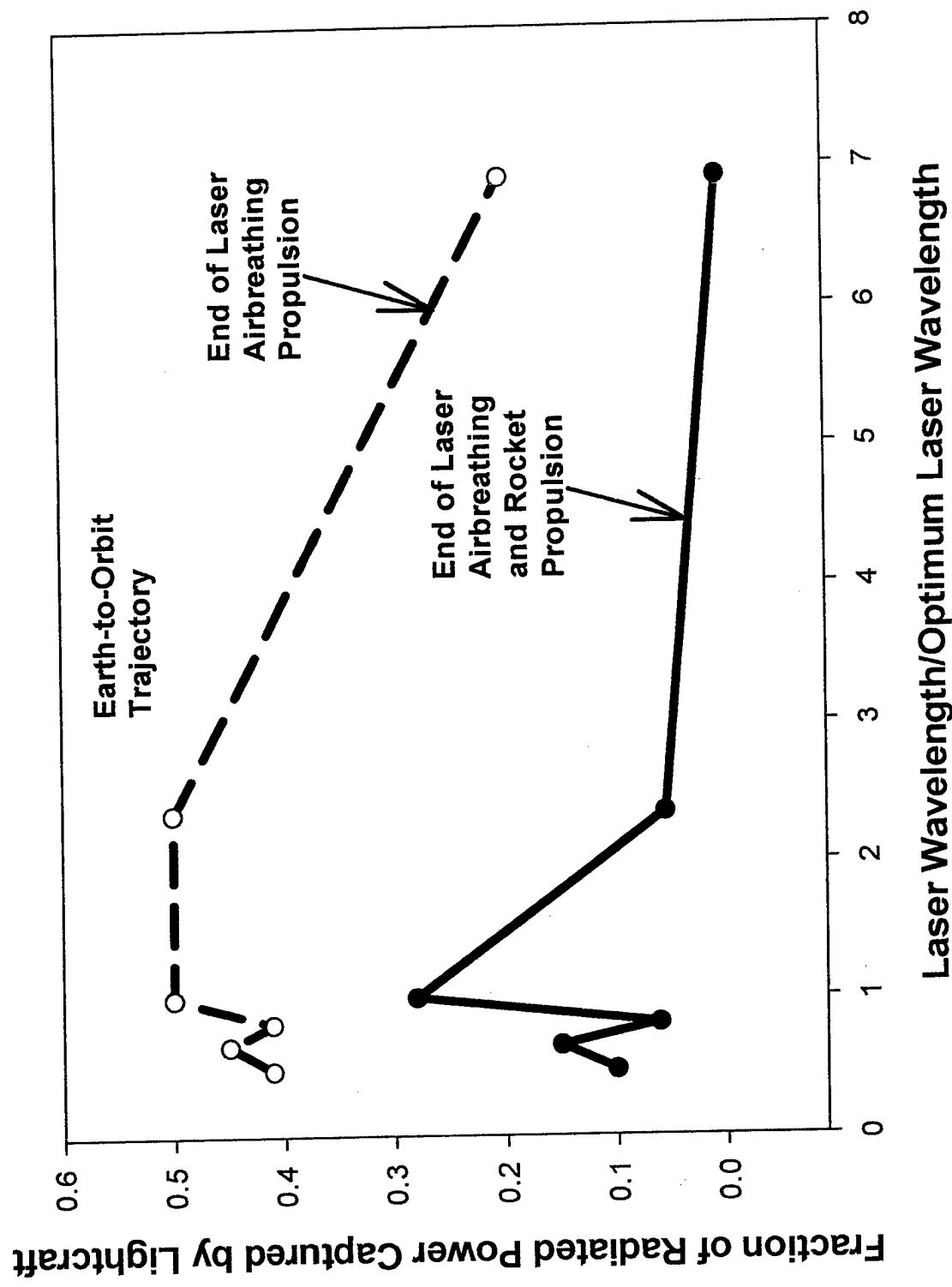


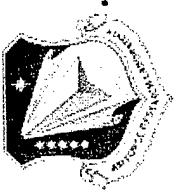
Influence on Laser Wavelength on Lightcraft Power Capture



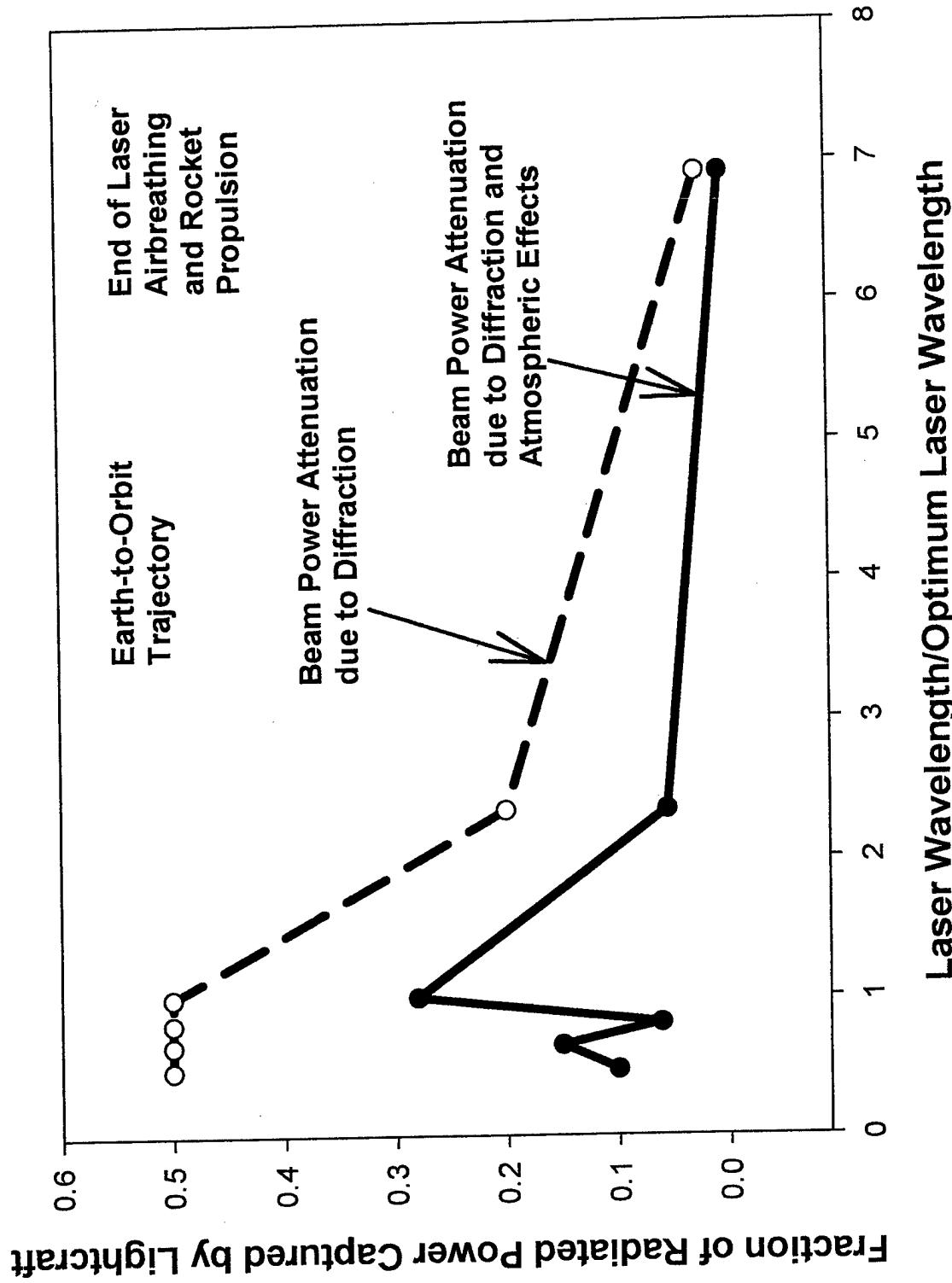
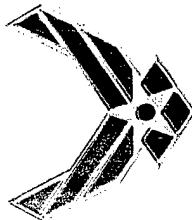


Influence of Wavelength on Lightcraft Power Captured



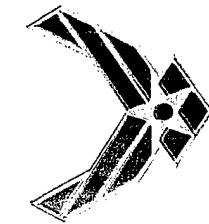


Influence of Wavelength on Lightcraft Power Captured

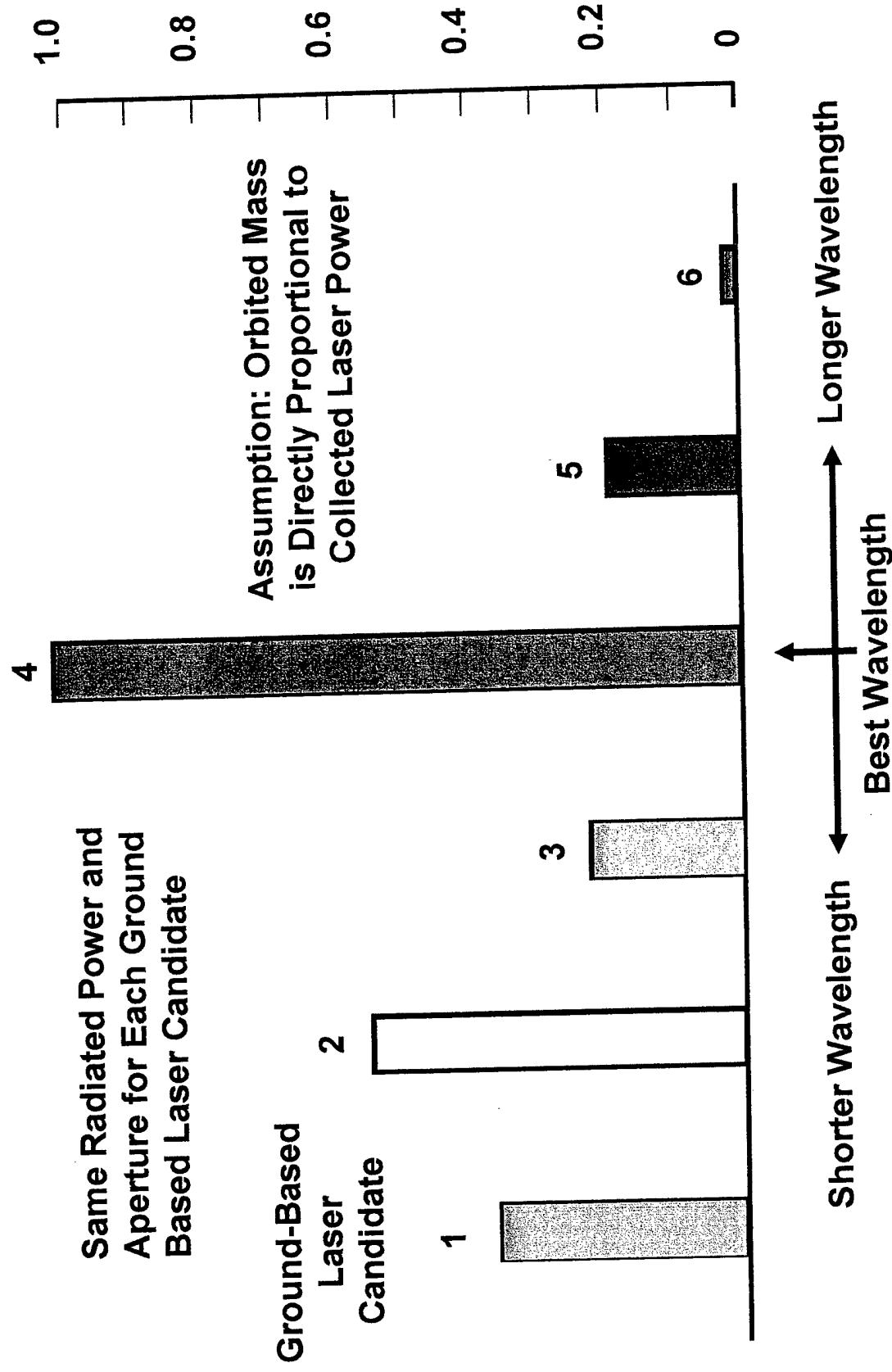




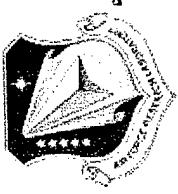
Influence of Wavelength on Orbited Mass



Same Radiated Power and Aperture for Each Ground Based Laser Candidate



Summary and Conclusions



- Laser-powered lightcraft systems that deliver microsatellites to low-earth-orbit (LEO) have been studied for the Air Force Research Laboratory
- The many iterations needed for design of such an earth-to-orbit (ETO) system requires a multi-disciplinary optimization (MDO) for definition of the ground-based laser and lightcraft vehicle elements
- An example is the influence of laser wavelength on the energy and power lost during laser beam propagation through Earth's atmosphere and space, and the resulting effect on mass delivered by lightcraft to orbit
- Here, energy and power losses in the laser beam are very significant for ETO missions, and losses are highly dependent on laser wavelength
- Thus, wavelength (together with other laser technical, operational, and cost issues) is an important consideration in laser selection for lightcraft